

It follows a presentation of the four noble truths based on two texts by the great Tibetan adept Panchen Sonam Drakpa. They are the two main texts traditionally used by Drepung Loseling Monastery, Ganden Shardze Monastery, the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, etc. during the study and debate of the various topics explained in the commentary on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, Maitreya's *Abhisamayamlamkara (Ornament for Clear Realizations)*.

The two texts are:

(I) General Meaning

Tibetan: སྔོན་ཤེས། - *Chi toen* (*Chi* = general/universal, *toen* = meaning)

This text gives general explanations, divisions, definitions, etc. of each topic

(II) Decisive Analysis

Tibetan: མཐའ་དཔྱད། - *Tha choe* (*Tha* = decisive/final/limit, *choe* = analysis/investigation)

This text analyzes and debates the different aspects of each topic. It gives precise definitions and refutes definitions and other assertions that are logically incorrect.

The presentation of the four noble truths according to the General Meaning:

The *General Meaning* expounds the four noble truths by way of five subtopics:

- 1) The definite enumeration of the four noble truths
- 2) The order of the four noble truths
- 3) The definitions of the four noble truths
- 4) The etymology of the four noble truths
- 5) The sixteen aspects of the four noble truths

1) The definite enumeration of the four noble truths

The four noble truths are a definite enumeration of four truths because from the point of view of *engaging* in cyclic existence there is a set of two truths that consist of a cause and an effect, and from the point of view of *eliminating* cyclic existence there is a set of two truths that consist of a cause and an effect. The first set from the point of view of engaging in cyclic existence refers to the truth of origin and the truth of suffering in that the truth of origin is the cause of the truth of suffering. The latter set from the point of view of eliminating cyclic existence refers to the truth of the path and the truth of cessation. Even though the truth of cessation is permanent and therefore not an actual effect or result of the truth of the path, it is nevertheless obtained in dependence on the truth of the path. Therefore the truth of cessation is the *nominal* effect of the truth of the path.

2) The order of the four noble truths

The Buddha set forth the four noble truths in the order not of their causation but of their comprehension. As explained above, according to the causal order, the truth of origin gives rise to the truth of suffering while the truth of the path gives rise to the truth of cessation. However, the Buddha presents the effects before the causes in order to demonstrate their application in practical understanding.

This process is illustrated by way of the analogy of an illness. First one recognizes the symptoms of the disease and then comes to understand its causes and that these causes must be eliminated. This leads to the wish to actualize the cessation of the symptoms and thereafter to implementing the remedy. Likewise, first we need to understand that our existence is in the nature of suffering. Then, seeing that our suffering is the result of delusions and contaminated karma we come to realize that we must overcome those causes. This in turn leads to the recognition that we can actualize the cessation of suffering and that this is possible by meditating on and cultivating the paths that take us there.

Maitreya says in his *Uttaratantra (Sublime Continuum)*:

*Just as an illness should be recognized, its causes eradicated,
A healthy state obtained, and the remedy applied, so also
Should suffering, its causes, its cessation, and the path
Be recognized, eradicated, actualized, and applied.*

Therefore, the order of the four noble truths is in accordance with the natural, psychological process of our mind which first recognizes a problem and then investigates its causes. When we understand the causes we come to know that it is possible to overcome the problem which in turn motivates us to search for a solution.

3) The definitions of the four noble truths

According to the General Meaning the category of the definitions of the four noble truths is again divided into four:

- (I) The definition of the truth of suffering
- (II) The definition of the truth of origin
- (III) The definition of the truth of cessation
- (IV) The definition of the truth of the path

(I) The definition of the truth of suffering

The definition of the truth of suffering is: a truth that has the aspect of affliction and that is a contaminated result.

Truths of suffering can be categorized into three: (1) suffering of suffering, (2) suffering of change, and (3) pervasive compositional suffering

Instances of those three are respectively: (a) all contaminated feelings of suffering, (b) all contaminated feelings of happiness, and (c) all contaminated aggregates that are the result of [contaminated] karma and delusions

(II) The definition of the truth of origin

The definition of the truth of origin is: a truth that has the aspect of affliction and that is a contaminated cause.

Truths of origin can be categorized into two: (1) karmic origin and (2) delusional origin

(1) *Karmic origin*

The origin that is karma can be categorized into three:

- a) Meritorious karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence
 - b) Non-meritorious karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence
 - c) Immovable karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence
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- a) *Meritorious karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence* can be subdivided into (I) projecting karma for rebirth as human beings and (II) projecting karma for rebirth as celestial beings of the desire realm
 - b) *Non-meritorious karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence* can be subdivided into (I) projecting karma for rebirth in the hell realm, (II) projecting karma for rebirth in the preta realm, and (III) projecting karma for rebirth in the animal realm
 - c) *Immovable karma that is subsumed under cyclic existence* can be subdivided into (I) projecting karma for rebirth in the form realm and (II) projecting karma for rebirth in the formless realm

(2) *Delusional origin*

The delusional origin can be categorized into two:

- a) The six primary delusions
- b) The twenty secondary delusions

Since those delusions were explained previously they are not listed here.

(III) The definition of the truth of cessation

The definition of the truth of cessation is: a separation that is the elimination of the object of abandonment by its attaining factor, a truth of the path.

